/23 cont./

584 is considered a mortal insult; /24/ in this case abduction is con-
[583] sidered the only way of satisfying one's injured self-esteem. But
[54] usually marriage negotiations are conducted in Abkhazia by female matchmakers or by intermediaries. If they bring the matter to a happy conclusion, their labors are rewarded with the
[465] heads and hides of the oxen that are butchered for the wedding. As soon as a mutual understanding has been reached, the bride and groom, after an exchange of presents, set a day for a meeting.

At the designated time, the groom and his friends set out, with presents, for the house of the parents of the bride. A
[583] princely groom sometimes brings as many as 20 or 30 horses, of which many are saddled. Now a feast is held at the groom's
[574] expense. During the banquet the friends of the groom, on the one hand, and those invited by the bride's parents, on the other, try in all possible ways to outdo each other in witticisms, puns, eloquence, in the amount of wine consumed, in singing, etc. The next day the comrades of the groom receive various presents and the groom himself receives a horse, or money and arms. Then the comrades return home, while the son-in-law remains in the house of the bride's parents with his delegate (dade).

But the future son-in-law still feels extremely ill at ease. According to the custom of the country, he may not yet show himself to the parents of the bride or their relatives. He is wrapped in a burka, and his head and face are wrapped in a bashlyk, under which only his eyes are barely visible. On the first night, during the feast, he hides himself somewhere outside and spends the night in a neighboring house. On the next day he is forcibly taken to the bride's house. But even now he does not dare to sit down and remains standing by the door, leaving it to his delegate to speak for him. In general it is not
[606] proper for the young son-in-law to eat with his parents-in-law, or sometimes even to sit down with them at the table. In some places, husband and wife never appear together before the wife's parents. This is considered shameful.

The bride takes up residence in a small house (amhara),

/25 cont./

585 as a sort of prediction that she, too, will give birth to a boy. A little later the bride is brought to the separate small house (amhara), and then the real wedding-feast begins.

On the second and third days the relatives come, meet the bride, and bring her presents, each according to his means. When they want to get acquainted with the bride, a friend of hers, her delegate (dade), lifts from her face the veil with which she is covered; the visitors greet the bride, and she, without saying a word, stands erect and quietly, with her eyes lowered. The responses are not made by her, but by her friend. When sufficient time has elapsed after the wedding, /26/ she answers questions addressed to her, but, instead of saying "yes" or "no," she only shakes her head.

The young bride remains in the amhara for some months; [592] then she is invited into the main house, and from this time on the whole care of the household is put on her shoulders. She always tries to satisfy her parents-in-law and to act according to their wishes. For several months she does not speak to anyone; afterwards she begins to speak, first to the younger people in the house and in the village, and later on also to the older ones, and last of all to her parents-in-law. The young bride is referred to by all the villagers as "our daughter-in-law"; they bring her various kinds of sewing-work, which she does without reward.

602 For many years the young couple avoids being seen together by the husband's parents, and they cannot eat together [606] [264] in their presence as long as they live. In conversation with older people, whether relatives or strangers, the wife cannot refer to her husband as "my husband," nor the husband to his wife as "my wife." The daughter-in-law may not sit down on the bench on [606] which her father-in-law or mother-in-law have been seated. [551] The wife can never call her husband by name and in cases of necessity manages instead with the pronouns "you" and "he." In the same way, she does not call by name her brother-in-law, her husband's foster parents, members of the family, the village elders, etc. The husband, on the other hand, only

avoids

/26 cont./

602 avoids pronouncing the name of his wife. When the wife's father
[606] and mother first visit their son-in-law, he must offer them presents in the same way as when he himself with his wife first visits the wife's parents.

V.

Mourning and Burial of the Dead

758 In general the Abkhaz are very compassionate towards the
574 sick and never leave alone a person who is seriously ill. When the villagers are informed that one of their number is seriously ill, all of them without fail will visit him, inquire about his illness, encourage him, and try to cheer him. The patient is visited not only by his relatives, but also by all the other villagers, irrespective of their title or means. They usually come to visit the patient in the evening and spend the whole night with him, singing, dancing, or telling stories, making jokes, etc., with the object of somehow /27/ cheering the invalid and relieving his sufferings in one way or another. The sick are treated with home remedies, old wise-women say prayers over them, etc.

763 As soon as a patient dies, the women instantly break out in deafening wails and soul-shaking screams, at the same time tearing out their hair, scratching their bodies, beating themselves on the face and head, and so on. Meanwhile the whole
764 neighborhood gathers, and the weeping and sobbing increase. Some women closely related to the deceased begin to beat themselves, striking their heads against something or other; the others try to soothe and quiet them. But all these admonitions frequently have no effect on the frenzied mourners, who, as a result of the blows they have inflicted upon their own heads and bodies and of beating their heads against something, fall down as if dead. When quiet finally prevails, the funeral ceremony is arranged. The next of kin sew themselves mourning apparel,
[203] and messengers are sent out with notices and invitations to the relatives, foster parents, friends, and acquaintances of the deceased; his fellow villagers on the other hand are obliged

A 585 [761 cont.] eat with her people or show his face, which he conceals with the hood of his coat. The bride now stays for a time in a special hut (amhara), after which a feast is arranged and she is blessed by the father of the house; the same is done for the groom when he returns to his father's house (apʻkhaš̆arkhe = removal of shame). The customs at the wedding, which takes place after the trousseau is completed, are almost the same as among the Osset (see p. 76). The young bride continues to live in the aforementioned small hut and may not speak with anyone. The young married couple may not visit the parents of the groom at the same time for several years afterward, and the two of them may never eat with them at the same time. The man may never utter his wife's name, nor she that of her husband or those of his relatives, in front of others.

A [606] [593] [607] [551]

C 583 582 [762] Among the Cherkess, too, girls are seldom stolen now; the bride is acquired for money and animals. The men marry from fifteen to twenty-five, the girls from twelve to sixteen years of age. During courtship (nakekh) the priest (mollah) completes the marriage contract after closure of the sale, as among the Mohammedan Abkhaz, whereby he joins the hands of the representatives of the bride's people. About two months later the purchase price is turned over, and soon thereafter the two- to three-week wedding festivities take place, with which are associated several peculiar customs preserved best in Kabarda.

A 584

C 585 The custom is so closely connected to the former abduction and defense by the kin group that, after the appearance of the bride, her mounted escorts defend themselves with their knouts against the youths, who stand in front of the house and attempt to unhorse them with poles until they succeed in jumping over the fence and gaining entrance to the house.

The groom is taken in for the wedding days as a "foster-son" (kan) by another kin group, from which he is assigned an escort (šatso-kot) of his own age, who attends him, hides him, since he is not allowed to meet older men until the "reconciliation" (see below), watches near him during the night, and rides about with him in the daytime in the hill pastures; here he gives him animals (šaga = for roasting), which he gives his people and